

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

1. Name

historic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Cathedral Square, Jefferson at Calhoun Streets _____ not for publication

city, town Fort Wayne _____ vicinity of _____ congressional district Fourth

state Indiana code 018 county Allen code 003

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
____ district	____ public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	____ agriculture	____ museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	____ unoccupied	____ commercial	____ park
____ structure	____ both	____ work in progress	____ educational	____ private residence
____ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	____ entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
____ object	____ in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	____ government	____ scientific
	____ being considered	____ yes: unrestricted	____ industrial	____ transportation
		____ no	____ military	____ other:

4. Owner of Property

name Catholic Diocese of Fort Wayne - South Bend

street & number P.O. Box 390

city, town Fort Wayne _____ vicinity of _____ state Indiana

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Allen County Courthouse, Wayne Twp. Assessor's Office

street & number 1 Main Street

city, town Fort Wayne _____ state Indiana 46802

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Indiana Historic Sites and
title Structures Inventory

has this property been determined eligible? ____ yes ☒ no

date 1979 _____ federal ☒ state _____ county _____ local

depository for survey records Indiana Department of Natural Resources

city, town Indianapolis _____ state Indiana

7. Description

Condition

☒ excellent
☐ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Fort Wayne Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception is the oldest church building in existence today in Fort Wayne, Indiana. During the course of the last 119 years, this Cathedral has undergone a number of renovations both on the interior and exterior. Basically speaking, it is a Gothic structure, one hundred and eighty feet long and eighty feet wide, with twin towers in the facade flanking the main portal. Originally, the building was of red brick trimmed with gray sandstone. These materials are presently covered over with stone.

The vaulted ceiling of the Cathedral is supported by fourteen clustered columns set twenty-two feet apart. The sanctuary is thirty-four feet deep and thirty-six feet wide. The cost of the church, exclusive of pews, organ and altars, was \$54,000. The organ cost \$3,000; the main altar, \$1,200; the pulpit, \$1,000; and the bishop's throne, \$700. The large candlesticks, which are still in use on the main altar, were made to order for the Fort Wayne Cathedral by a group of nuns in France at a cost of 4,500 francs. An exact facsimile of these candlesticks was later placed in the famous Church of the Magdalena in Paris. Of the money raised for the Cathedral's construction, more than \$46,000 was raised by Father Julian Benoit, the architect, on his own initiative.

The Cathedral has experienced a number of interior changes, but structurally has remained the same. In the years 1896 and 1897, the present Bavarian stained glass windows were installed. All fourteen of these windows were created by F. X. Zettler, at the Royal Bavarian Art Institute for Stained Glass in Munich, Germany. All fourteen windows (seven on each side) are dedicated to a scene in the life of Mary, in honor of whom the Cathedral is named. These windows are considered to be the best examples of this type of stained glass in the entire Western Hemisphere. A recent appraisal of these fourteen windows valued each of them in excess of \$25,000. Their original cost is unknown. Also between the years 1896 and 1897, the first of this Cathedral's now famous wood carvings were installed. The fourteen Stations of the Cross, all dedicated to a scene in the life of Christ, were hand-carved in Germany and brought to this country especially for this church. During this time, too, the solid marble communion railing was installed.

In 1906, improvements were made to the crypt (located directly under the sanctuary) in order to provide a suitable burial place for church dignitaries. At present, the first four bishops of the Diocese and three of the Cathedral's rectors are buried there.

Between the years of 1925 and 1935, A. M. Mowat, of New York, Chicago and Paris, designed the now world-famous hand-carved sanctuary depicting the Redemption of Mankind. The actual wood carvings were done by two men brought over from the wood-carving capital of the world, Oberammergau, Germany. Installed were a light oak hand-carved reredos, altars, statues, panels and a bishop's throne. These wood carvings have been said to be the best example of the wood carvers' art in the entire United States. During this renovation period, too, the Cathedral was given a new terrazzo floor, laid over the original floor, new pews to match the Gothic elegance of the church, electric chandeliers, a new organ and carillon.

Following World War II, the present three pipe organs were installed. In 1948, the side altars were moved to their present positions and the choir/clergy stalls were installed. In 1960, the pulpit was lowered from its front pillared location and placed on the floor of the sanctuary. At this same time, the communion railing was lowered to one step above floor level, thereby providing a better overall view of the sanctuary from the nave. In

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1859–1860

Builder/Architect Architect: Rev. Msgr. Julian Benoit

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Both the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception and the site upon which the church is located have great historical and architectural significance for Fort Wayne and northern Indiana. Architecturally, the building is a fine example of the Gothic style. The stained glass windows, dating from the late nineteenth century, and the interior wood carvings, dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, are considered to be among the most beautiful examples of both crafts in the western hemisphere. Also, the site was a burial ground for the Miami Indians, a tribe once powerful in the area. The first Catholic church, rectory, school, and cemetery in northern Indiana were built on the site. The present Cathedral is the oldest church building in the city of Fort Wayne.

In 1831, Father Stephen Badin, later instrumental in founding the University of Notre Dame at South Bend, assisted the Catholic families around Fort Wayne in purchasing land for a church. The first building was a temporary log structure erected in 1835. The Catholic community erected the first permanent church, also built of logs, in 1837. Successive land purchases allowed the size of the site to expand and a cemetery (1840), and school (1845), and rectory (1853–54) were added to the church square.

In 1846, Father Julian Benoit interceded between the remaining Miami Indians and the United States government, which had ordered their removal to a reservation in Kansas. At Father Benoit's urging, Chief LaFontaine consented to be removed. The Miami burial ground in Fort Wayne, however, remained behind and is now part of the Cathedral square. Jean-Baptiste Richardville, a Miami chief and descendant of one of the most important French families in the Old Northwest, the Drouet de Richerville family, is buried there. A stone marker, erected by the Daughters of the American Revolution, marks the Richardville grave.

On September 22, 1857, the Vatican established the Diocese of Fort Wayne, thereby necessitating the building of a cathedral church. Late in that year, Father Benoit had the original log church moved to the east side of the square. Fort Wayne's first bishop, the Most Reverend John H. Luers, laid the cornerstone on June 19, 1859. The cathedral took eighteen months to build and was dedicated in December, 1860.

The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception is an architectural masterpiece. The present Bavarian stained glass windows are considered to be among the best examples of this type of stained glass in the western hemisphere. Its wood carvings, executed by German craftsmen, are excellent examples of the wood carvers' art. The Fort Wayne Sentinel of October 20, 1860, stated that "this magnificent edifice ... is one of the finest on the continent and altogether, the grandest church structure in the West."

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1965, in order to comply with the guidelines set forth by the Second Vatican Council, a new portable altar was installed in order to say Mass facing the people. The stone and marble altar installed during the early part of the century was not removed, however, and is still in place today. Finally in 1974, a new pulpit was installed (made from wood salvaged from some of the choir/clergy stalls), thereby completing the total use of wood in the sanctuary.

Exterior

The Cathedral was originally of red brick trimmed with gray sandstone. Its architect, being a Frenchman, designed a Cathedral which was French Gothic in appearance. By the early 1900s, however, the original red brick was beginning to corrode, and between 1910 and 1921, this red brick was covered with imitation rock. At this time the north sacristy was enlarged by the addition of a second floor. In 1924, the south sacristy was also enlarged and two small side wings were added to the east end of the Cathedral, forming an abbreviated transept which provides side entrances. In 1935, the slates were removed from the two spires and replaced with copper which remains to this day.

Shortly after World War II, the imitation rock which covered the Cathedral was beginning to disintegrate and fall off in large sections. Thus in 1949-50, the exterior of the entire Cathedral was refaced with Indiana Limestone and Wisconsin Lannonstone. During this renovation, the exterior of the Cathedral was somewhat altered. The French Gothic designs of its architect, Father Benoit, gave way to the more streamlined ways of German Gothic, in order to better harmonize the Cathedral with the ultra-modern designs of the Chapel and Diocesan Chancery which were being built on the Square at that time. The pinnacles and parapets were removed from the towers. The twenty-eight foot stained glass windows in front were reduced in size and the tiers of ventilators on the upper part of the towers were changed. The small rose window high up on the center of the facade was taken out, filled in and covered with stone. The tracery around the niche, above the main entrance, was simplified and the statue of the Immaculate Conception in this niche was refinished. A new double door of glass and bronze was set in the main entrance. The old stone steps were removed and broader ones were installed. The plaza was redesigned with a new curved double walk forming a semi-circle to Calhoun Street and bordered by a low wall of limestone and lannonstone in descending tiers.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property Less than one acre

Quadrangle name Fort Wayne West, Indiana

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	6	6	5	6	4	4	0	4	5	4	8	6	2	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Lot 271 of Cathedral Square

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mrs. Ann Bley

organization

date September 1978

street & number 2100 St. Mary's Avenue, Apt. 226

telephone 219-743-1401

city or town Fort Wayne

state Indiana

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date August 6, 1980

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
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Cathedral of the Immaculate
 Conception
 Fort Wayne, Indiana
 UTM Reference: 16/656440/4548620